

REMARKS

Claims 1-21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant's Admitted Prior Art ("the AAPA") in view of Boutaghou et al. (U.S. 6,377,422). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection as follows. With respect to claims 1 and 13, Applicant traverses because neither of the cited references, whether taken alone or in combination, discloses or suggests air bearing portions, head/dummy elements, and protection film portions all having different surface level heights with respect to the main body of the head slider. With respect to claim 21, Applicant traverses because the references do not teach or suggest a separate head unit and base portion at an air outflow end of a head slider, each of different longitudinal lengths projecting from the slider.

As shown in the AAPA (Fig. 2B) the head portion 6 and the base portion 3B each have the same height level at the air outflow end of the air bearing portion 32. In other words, there is no difference in level between the head portion 6 and the base portion 3B with respect to the slider body 2 where they meet the air bearing portion 32.

Claims 1 and 13 of the present invention, on the other hand, have been amended to more clearly recite, among other things, that not only do the top surfaces of the head and dummy head portions have different levels next to the air bearing portions, but also that a third protection film portion formed adjacent to the protection films on the head and dummy head portions has a still different height level with respect to the slider main body. In other words, claims 1 and 13 now more clearly feature that the top surfaces of the

head/dummy head portions are located in between the surfaces of the air bearing portions and the third protection film portion. Comparing the base portion 3B of the AAPA with the third protection film portion recited in claims 1 and 13, it is clear that the AAPA fails to show or suggest any such top surface level configuration as now clearly recited.

The Examiner cites Boutaghou merely for teaching that it is known in the art to use thin film layers to protect surfaces of head sliders in general. Boutaghou fails to teach or suggest, however, any third protection film portion, adjacent to the first and second protection film portions, at a different height level with respect to the surface of the slider body. Accordingly, for at least these reasons, the Section 103 rejection of claims 1 and 13, as well as their respective dependent claims 2-3, 6-8, 14-15, and 18-20, based on the Examiner's proposed combination, is respectfully traversed.

Applicant further traverses the rejection of independent claim 21 for reasons similar to those discussed above with respect to independent claims 1 and 13. The AAPA clearly shows that the head portion 6 (and dummy head portion 7) projects to exactly the same longitudinal distance from the air bearing portion 32 (and 33) rearward at the air outflow end of the slider body 2. In other words, the AAPA does not show any difference in the rear longitudinal length of the head portion 6 and the base portion 3B. (See Figs. 2A-3A). As discussed above, Boutaghou has not been cited by the Examiner for teaching anything other than protection films in general. Applicant submits that Boutaghou also fails to teach or suggest any such structure as clearly featured in claim 21 of the present invention.

For at least these reasons therefore, the Section 103 rejection of claim 21 is also respectfully traversed.

In addition to the claim amendments noted above, Applicants have further amended the claims in the interests of expediting prosecution to correct for grammatical inconsistencies and/or clarity. Reconsideration of the outstanding rejections in their entirety is respectfully requested based on all of the preceding claim amendments.

For all of the foregoing reasons, Applicant submits that this Application, including claims 1-3, 6-8, 13-15, and 18-21, is in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested. Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney if an interview would expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

GREER, BURNS & CRAIN, LTD.

By



Josh C. Snider

Registration No. 47,954

Customer No. 24978

April 2, 2004

300 South Wacker Drive - Suite 2500

Chicago, Illinois 60606

Telephone: (312) 360-0080

Facsimile: (312) 360-9315

P:\DOCS\2803\65313\413541.DOC